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Master Metals chief sentenced

Mickey had doctored employees' health records

By SANDRA LIVINGSTON
PLAIN DEALER REPORTER

AKRON

Master Metals Inc. President Douglas Mickey was sentenced yesterday to four months in prison for doctoring records about the lead levels in his employees' blood.

Mickey will most likely spend the time in a low-security correction center in Cleveland so he can continue to work at the secondary lead-smelting company on W. 3rd St.

Mickey showed little emotion as U.S. District Judge Sam Bell of Akron also fined him \$15,000 and sentenced him to two-years' probation, with the first four months to be spent in home confinement and wearing an electronic monitoring device. Mickey previously had pleaded guilty to criminal charges of falsifying records submitted to the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

"While I must respect business," said Bell,

"it must be conducted in the rightful manner, not just the employer's manner."

Mickey declined to comment after the ruling but seemed pleased.

"We thank Judge Bell for directing that Mr. Mickey be permitted to enter the work-release program and continue to work at Master Metals on a daily basis," said Patrick McLaughlin, Mickey's lawyer. "This way, Doug Mickey can continue his efforts to save the company and the jobs of all employees."

Government lawyers were also pleased. "Our primary goal was to prove Mickey had disregarded the risk of serious bodily injury" to workers, said Ann Rowland, an assistant U.S. Attorney.

During the hearing, Mickey said he "made a grave mistake" by changing the records, but said he did so to gain time to complete several plant-improvement projects and continue trying to reduce the employees' blood-lead levels.

In recent years, "I have given myself to making this place work in an environmentally sound manner," he said.

After the hearing, Mickey dodged a news photographer by hiding behind a parking-deck pillar and then running back into the courthouse and down a flight of stairs to his lawyer's waiting car.

For more than 10 years, Master Metals has been cited for violations of worker-health requirements and environmental regulations.

In the current case, the government charged that Mickey knew in 46 instances that employees' blood-lead levels were higher than reported to OSHA.

The government also said 17 workers — whose levels were incorrectly reported to OSHA — had so much lead in their blood that federal law would dictate they be taken off the job.

Workers must be removed from their regu-

lar jobs when their blood-lead level reaches 60 micrograms per 100 grams of whole blood or when they have a three-test average of 50 micrograms.

The government found that from 1987 to 1990, some Master Metals workers had blood-lead levels above 100 micrograms per 100 grams of whole blood. Mickey's own level ranged from 46 to 65, according to the records.

Excessive lead exposure can cause kidney damage, anemia, neurological damage and reproductive damage.

The downtown Cleveland center Bell recommended for Mickey's prison sentence has individual bedrooms and shared bathrooms.

During his home confinement, Mickey can work at Master Metals and seek medical treatment. Most other activities will require prior written approval.

He also must perform 400 hour of community service.

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